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Buffalo's Assets

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Buffalo's Assets

Abstract

In its Principles for a Revitalized Buffalo, the Partnership for the Public Good calls for a strategy that starts from our assets. This Buffalo Brief provides just a small sampling of our region's assets.

Keywords

Buffalo, Data/Demographics/History, Demographics and Data, Fact Sheet, PPG, PDF

Buffalo's Assets

In its Principles for a Revitalized Buffalo, the Partnership for the Public Good calls for a strategy that starts from our assets. This Buffalo Brief provides just a small sampling of our region's assets.

Diversity

- The Buffalo-Niagara metropolitan region is currently
 - 11.8% African-American
 - 0.7% American Indian
 - 1.7% Asian/Pacific Islander
 - 3.6% Hispanic
 - 1.2% Multi-Racial
 - 81% White¹
- The fastest growing populations in the metro area from 2000 to 2009 were Multi-Racial (33.7%), Asian/Pacific Islander (22.4%), and Hispanic (17.4%).²
- In the 2000 Census, 8.4% of metro residents reported speaking a language other than English at home.³
- Between 2003-2006, 6,302 immigrants came to Buffalo-Niagara; the top five nations of origin were Canada, Yemen, China, India, and the Ukraine. Of these immigrants, 31% were refugees or asylees from nations such as Burma, Somali, and Sudan.⁴
- The University at Buffalo has the highest percentage (15.4%) of international students of any major public university in the U.S.⁵

Historic Architecture

- According to architectural critic Nicolai Ourousoff, "Buffalo is home to some of the greatest American architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with major architects like Henry Hobson Richardson, Frederick Law Olmsted, Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright building marvels here. Together they shaped one of the grandest early visions of the democratic American city."⁶
- Buffalo is home to 293 State and National Landmarks.⁷
- Erie County has 143 properties on the National Register of Historic Places, of which 85 are in the city of Buffalo⁸
- Buffalo has 11 historic districts.⁹
- Buffalo has nine National Historic Landmarks:

- Guaranty Building (Louis Sullivan, architect)
- Darwin-Martin House (Frank Lloyd Wright, architect)
- Buffalo Psychiatric Center (H.H. Richardson, architect)
- Kleinhans Music Hall (Eliel and Eero Saarinen, architects)
- Masten Avenue Armory
- Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society
- St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral
- U.S.S. The Sullivans
- The Edward M. Cotter Fireboat¹⁰

Olmsted Parks

In the late 1800s, visionary citizens brought Frederick Law Olmsted to Buffalo. It was here that Olmsted, inspired by Joseph Ellicott's radial street layout, designed his first system of parks and parkways, and proclaimed Buffalo to be "the best designed city in the country, if not the world." During the 1901 Pan American Exposition, Buffalo was celebrated not only as the City of Light, but the City of Trees.¹¹ The six Olmsted Parks are spread throughout the city:

- Cazenovia Park
- Delaware Park
- Front Park
- MLK Jr. Park
- Riverside Park
- South Park

In addition, there are eight circles and eight parkways that link city and suburban roads, allow for long "fingers" of green to extend into the city from large parks, and let people walk through the entire park system without leaving the park-like atmosphere.¹²

Neighborhoods and Quality of Life

- In 2011 Forbes Magazine rated Buffalo the best city in the nation for working mothers¹³
- In 2010, BestPlaces.net ranked Buffalo second on its list of Best Places to Relocate To, based on factors such as cost of living, educational, cultural, and sports opportunities, health, safety, and stability.¹⁴
- In 2007 the American Planning Association selected Elmwood Village as one of 10 Great Neighborhoods in America for its "vitality, broad spectrum of cultural and social assets, and its commitment to maintaining high community standards while solving real problems."¹⁵
- In 2010 Forbes Magazine rated Buffalo the 10th best place to raise a family.¹⁶
- The average one-way commute is 21.1 minutes (2008)¹⁷ A Forbes magazine study of the 75 largest metro areas named Buffalo the "Best City for Commuters," citing short commute time and lack of traffic delays.

- USA Today named Buffalo the winner of its 2001 "City with a Heart" contest, based on a reader poll in which dozens of Buffalonians wrote in with anecdotes illustrating why their hometown was the nation's "friendliest city."¹⁸
- In July 2010, CNNMoney.com ranked Amherst 42nd in a list of the Top 100 Best Places to Live in America.¹⁹
- Based on statistics reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Amherst has frequently been ranked as the Safest City in America (1996–1998, 2000–2003, 2010); many other years it ranks within the Top 5.²⁰
- As *New York* magazine put it, in an article about Buffalo titled *Where the Urban Dream Life is Going Cheap*, Buffalo “offers the chance to live on the cheap and start a nonprofit organization, or rent an abandoned church for \$1,000 a month, or finish your album without having to hold down two temp jobs at the same time, or simply have more space and a better view and enough money left over each month to buy yourself a painting once in a while.”²¹

Colleges and Universities

- The region has 21 institutions of higher learning with roughly 105,000 college students and 32,000 employees.²²
- In 2009, the American Institute for Economic Research ranked Buffalo number 9 among mid-sized metros as best places for college students to live.

| | Total Enrollment | Undergrad | Tuition |
|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---|
| Buffalo State College | 11,714 ²³ | 9,822 ²⁴ | \$5,375 ²⁵ |
| Canisius College | 4,744 ²⁶ | 3,196 ²⁷ | \$29,020 ²⁸ |
| Daemen College | 2,838 ²⁹ | 1,955 ³⁰ | \$18,750 ³¹ |
| D’Youville College | 2,900 ³² | 1,508 ³³ | \$19,800 ³⁴ |
| Erie Community College | 13,012 ³⁵ | N/A ³⁶ | \$4,227 ³⁷ |
| Medaille College | 2,971 ³⁸ | 1,811 ³⁹ | \$29,214 ⁴⁰ |
| Trocaire College | 1,076 ⁴¹ | N/A | \$12,174 ⁴² |
| University at Buffalo | 27,220 ⁴³ | 18,165 ⁴⁴ | In State: \$6,128 Out of State: \$12,388 ⁴⁵ |

Bi-National Location with Lake Erie, Niagara Falls, and Miles of Waterfront

- The “Golden Horseshoe,” which stretches from Toronto to Rochester, is the fourth largest urban region in North America and the second fastest growing (adding 110,000 people per year).⁴⁶

- The Niagara River/Lake Erie Watershed contains 4,086 miles of freshwater rivers and streams.
- Lake Erie has the greatest variety of freshwater sport fish in the country.⁴⁷
- Niagara Falls draws over 14 million visitors each year.⁴⁸

Mild Sunny, Summer Weather

According to Wikipedia, “Buffalo has the sunniest and driest summers of any major city in the Northeast, but still has enough rain to keep vegetation green and lush. Summers are marked by plentiful sunshine and moderate humidity and temperature. It receives, on average, over 65% of possible sunshine in June, July and August. Obscured by the notoriety of Buffalo's winter snow is the fact that Buffalo benefits from other lake effects such as the cooling southwest breezes off Lake Erie in summer that gently temper the warmest days. As a result, the Buffalo station of the National Weather Service has never recorded an official temperature of 100 °F or more. Rainfall is moderate but typically occurs at night. The stabilizing effect of Lake Erie continues to inhibit thunderstorms and enhance sunshine in the immediate Buffalo area through most of July.”

Farms and Gardens

- New York State’s average farm is less than 200 acres, about half the national average.⁴⁹
- New York State has 827 organic farms – fourth highest in the nation.⁵⁰
- New York ranks third in the nation in dairy, sixth in fruits, nuts, and berries, eleventh in vegetables, melons, and potatoes, and twelfth in greenhouse, nursery, and floriculture. New York is second in apple production and third in grape production, with Western New York producing the most grapes of any region in the state.⁵¹
- Buffalo’s urban farms include the Massachusetts Avenue Project Growing Green farm, the Wilson Street Farm, the Curtis Urban Farm Foundation, the Queen City Farm, and the CurbSide Croft Farm.
- Grassroots Gardens counts over 50 community gardens in Buffalo.⁵²
- Garden Walk Buffalo, a free annual tour of more than 350 gardens, is the largest garden tour in America and draws some 50,000 visitors per year.⁵³
- Located in a rebuilding area of Buffalo’s West Side, Urban Roots is an innovative, cooperatively owned garden store.

Local, Independent Businesses

- Buffalo First is a nonprofit organization comprised of nearly 400 locally-owned, independent businesses, organizations, and concerned citizens. Its mission is to build a local, fair, green economy in the Buffalo-Niagara Region.⁵⁴
- Other business associations focused on smaller businesses include the Black Chamber of Commerce of Western New York, the Elmwood Village, the Grant-Ferry Association, the Greater South Buffalo Chamber of Commerce, and the Hertel-North Buffalo Business Association.

- Of the region's 37,400 firms, 94% are small – employing 50 or fewer workers.⁵⁵

Stable, Diversifying, Highly Productive Economy

- Buffalo's efficient, productive workforce produces a large amount of output per person. Of the world's 200 largest metropolitan areas, Buffalo ranked number 19 in 2011 for highest gross domestic product (GDP) per capita.⁵⁶
- 2010 unemployment in Buffalo-Niagara was 8.4%, compared to 9.6% nationwide.⁵⁷
- Of the nation's 100 largest metro areas, Buffalo ranks in the top 20 for performance during the Great Recession and its aftermath, based on employment, gross metropolitan product, and housing prices.⁵⁸
- While manufacturing jobs declined 22% from 2001 to 2009, health services jobs rose 24%, professional and business jobs rose 17%, leisure and hospitality rose 8%, and education rose 6%, and financial activities rose 4%.⁵⁹
- Buffalo remains a manufacturing hub. In 2007, Buffalo's manufacturing sector provided 60,000 jobs, which represented 11 percent of all jobs in the region and 11 percent of the State's manufacturing jobs.⁶⁰

Well-educated, Affordable workforce

- Buffalo-Niagara residents are highly educated:
 - 12.5% have a graduate degree (the national average is 10.3%)
 - Only 11.2% have less than a high school diploma (the national average is 14.8%)⁶¹
- Buffalo Niagara labor costs are lower than those of other northeastern cities such as Cleveland and Boston.⁶² Wages are 3% below the national average,⁶³ and health insurance costs are 25% below the national average.⁶⁴

High Quality, Affordable Housing

- According to Forbes.com, Buffalo is ranked 3rd among major metros in having the most affordable housing.⁶⁵
- The ratio of home value to \$1,000 of income in Buffalo is second among the nation's 52 major markets at \$2,355.⁶⁶
- Erie County has one of the lowest property tax burdens in New York. In 2007, the average Erie County household paid \$2,627 in property taxes, compared to \$10,990 in Westchester County.⁶⁷ Of counties nationwide, Erie County ranked 152 in amount paid in property taxes.⁶⁸

Vibrant Arts and Culture

- The three congressional districts of Western New York are home to 3,586 arts businesses with 28,056 employees.⁶⁹
- *AmericanStyle* ranked Buffalo fourth in its list of America's top art destinations.
- Buffalo is home to 22 professional theaters, including trailblazers such as Ujima, which focuses on African-American productions, and the Irish Classical – founded by two brothers from

Dublin so inspired by Buffalo's theater scene that they moved to Buffalo to found their company.

- WNET AM 970 has the highest primetime ratings nationally for a PBS radio station.⁷⁰
- Shakespeare in Delaware Park is the second largest outdoor Shakespeare festival in the country.
- Buffalo is home to over 50 private and public art galleries, most notably the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, home to a world-class collection of modern and contemporary art. The Burchfield Penny Art Center, which focuses on the art of Western New York, opened a stunning new museum building in 2008, certified LEED-Silver for its environmental qualities. The local art scene also features Hallwalls, CEPA Gallery, and many other galleries.
- Independent recording artist Ani DiFranco's Righteous Babe record label is headquartered in Buffalo in a former church it saved from the wrecking ball and restored beautifully.
- Buffalo's thriving literary scene features local writers like Pulitzer-prize-winning poet Carl Dennis, independent publishers such as White Pine and Starcherone, and an international authors series, Babel, that regularly draws audiences of over 1,000 to hear authors such as Salman Rushdie, Orhan Pamuk, and Isabelle Allende. The Buffalo News may be the only major daily newspaper in the nation that prints poetry once a week.
- The Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, founded in 1934, has a storied history including conductors such as Lukas Foss, Michael Tilson Thomas, and, currently, JoAnn Falletta.
- The third oldest zoo in the United States, the Buffalo Zoo draws some 400,000 visitors per year (second only to Niagara Falls among local attractions). Under its 2002 15-year master plan, the Zoo has recently added an Otter Creek, a Sea-Lion Cove, and a South American Rainforest.⁷¹

¹ Harvard School of Public Health, <http://diversitydata.sph.harvard.edu/>, summed from U.S. Census Bureau. Annual County Resident Population Estimates by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2009.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ "Upstate's Recent Arrivals," Regional Institute, University at Buffalo

⁵ "Upstate's Recent Arrivals," Regional Institute, University at Buffalo

⁶ *New York Times*, 11/16/08

⁷ http://www.oprhpa.state.ny.us/hpimaging/hp_results.asp

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Register_of_Historic_Places_listings_in_Buffalo,_New_York#cite_note-0

⁹ <http://www.preservationbuffaloniagara.org/page/buffalo-preservation-board/>

¹⁰ <http://www.buffaloah.com/a/landmks/nhl.html>

¹¹ <http://www.bfloparks.org/>

¹² *Id.*

¹³ "The Best Cities for Working Mothers 2011", Forbes.com, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/meghancasserly/2011/10/11/the-best-cities-for-working-mothers-2011/>

¹⁴ BestPlaces.net

¹⁵ American Planning Association, <http://myapa.planning.org/greatplaces/neighborhoods/elmwoodvillage.htm>

¹⁶ "America's Best Places to Raise a Family". Forbes.com.

¹⁷ Buffalo Niagara Enterprise, www.buffaloniagara.com

¹⁸ <http://www.grad.buffalo.edu/life/buffalo.php>

¹⁹ <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/moneymag/bplive/2010/snapshots/CS3602000.html>

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²¹ Adam Sternbergh, "Where the Urban Dream Life is Going Cheap," *New York*, August, 24, 2008

²² www.aier.org; Jay Rey, "Buffalo named a top collegiate destination," Buffalo News, September 9, 2010.

²³ Fall 2009 data from <http://www.buffalostate.edu/offices/instrsch/enrollment/enrollment.htm>

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ <http://www.campusexplorer.com/colleges/7E34F885/New-York/Buffalo/Buffalo-State-College/>

²⁶ Fall 2009 data from http://www.canisius.edu/oir/at_a_glance.asp

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ http://www.canisius.edu/student_accts/tuition.asp

²⁹ <http://www.daemen.edu/news/Newsreleases/Pages/DaemenCollegeEnrollmentUpforFall,2009.aspx>

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ <http://collegestats.org/college/daemen-college>

³² <http://www.dyc.edu/admissions/>

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ http://www.stateuniversity.com/universities/NY/Erie_Community_College.html

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ http://www.stateuniversity.com/universities/NY/Medaille_College.html

³⁹ <http://collegesearch.collegeboard.com/search/CollegeDetail.jsp?collegeId=1326>

⁴⁰ http://www.stateuniversity.com/universities/NY/Medaille_College.html

⁴¹ http://www.stateuniversity.com/universities/NY/Trocaire_College.html

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ 2005-2006 data from http://education-portal.com/articles/SUNY_at_Buffalo_-_University_at_Buffalo.html

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ Queen City in the 21st Century, Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan, p. 6.

⁴⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffalo,_New_York

⁴⁸ Who's Your Economy, buffalo Niagara Labor Market Assessment 2010 (Regional Institute, University at Buffalo)

⁴⁹ New York State Comptroller, "The Role of Agriculture in the New York State Economy" (February 2010)

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⁵² www.grassrootsgardens.org

⁵³ <http://www.gardenwalkbuffalo.com/>

⁵⁴ www.buffalofirst.org

⁵⁵ Who's Your Economy, buffalo Niagara Labor Market Assessment 2010 (Regional Institute, University at Buffalo)

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⁵⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics, NYS Department of Labor

⁵⁸ Brookings Institute, MetroMonitor, September 2010

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⁶⁰ New York State Comptroller, "An Economic Snapshot of the Buffalo Metropolitan Region" (June 2008)

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⁶⁵ http://www.forbes.com/2009/02/19/cities-affordable-ten-lifestyle-real-estate_cities_slide_9.html

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⁶⁷ New York State Office of Real Property Services, www.orps.state.ny.us

⁶⁸ Tax Foundation, www.taxfoundation.org

⁶⁹ Americans for the Arts, Creative Industries 2009: the Congressional Report

⁷⁰ Personal conversation with WNED Director of Education and Outreach John Craig, October 2011

⁷¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffalo_Zoo